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NEWS RELEASE

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VALLEY TRIO SENTENCED IN FRAUD AGAINST TARGET STORES

Two Serving Prison Time for Their Roles in the Fraud

SACRAMENTO—United States Attorney McGregor W. Scott announced today that the last of a trio of identity thieves was sentenced today by United States District Judge Lawrence K. Karlton. NATOSHA SAUNDERS, 22, of Sacramento, received a three-year term of probation, including six months of home detention for credit card fraud and identity theft.

Co-defendants KELVIN BANISTER, 25, of Sacramento, was sentenced March 4, 2008 to 24 months in federal prison, and JASMINE JOHNSTON, 22, was sentenced November 30, 2007 to 18 months in federal prison. The three defendants were ordered by the court to pay restitution to the victims of the fraud, including Target and several banks. These sentences follow the pleas of guilty by the defendants to computer fraud.

The case was the product of an investigation undertaken by the United States Secret Service and was handled by the Computer Hacking and Intellectual Property (CHIP) unit at the United States Attorney's Office.

According to Assistant United States Attorney Robin R. Taylor, who prosecuted the case, defendants BANISTER, JOHNSTON, and SAUNDERS used multiple stolen credit card numbers and credit cards at Target stores throughout the Sacramento Valley to make purchases. They admitted in court that they were able to use stolen credit cards to make purchases even if the cards were initially declined at the cash register. According to court documents, the defendants would instruct the cashiers to enter "override codes" into the cash register, and the transactions would then be processed allowing them to purchase merchandise. As a result, the defendants fraudulently purchased, and attempted to purchase, gift cards and merchandise valued at more than \$50,000.

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